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# THE ETYMOLOGY OF SOME WORDS IN THE OLD PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS

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AT TWO RECENT MEETINGS of the Society, in 1914 and 1917, I presented brief communications regarding the etymology of some words in the Old Persian Inscriptions. Three of these are grouped together in this paper, to be followed at a later time, it is hoped, by a number of others. The citations thruout refer to the inscriptional line, not the paragraph; I have preferred that method both because it is the more practical and because I remember so well how the line—not the paragraph—came into account as I stood on the ledge of the Bahistān Rock in 1903.

## 1. Old Persian *amuθa* 'he fled'

The meaning of the word *amuθa* had long been a puzzle for scholars because they had taken the form to be a pronominal adverb, signifying 'there' or 'from there,' until its real meaning was correctly made out in 1902 by Hüsing, *KZ* 38. 258, when he pointed to the fact that it was actually a verb and signified 'he fled.'

Hüsing upheld this interpretation by the support given thru the Elamitic and Babylonian versions of the Old Persian vocable, namely El. *pu-ut-tuk-ka* and Bab. *iḥ-lik-ma*, as shown by their renderings of *amuθa* in Bh. 2. 2, 71; 3. 41-42, 71 (cf. also Weissbach, *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, p. 27, notes *a* and *e*). The translation 'fled' has therefore been generally adopted since. See, for example, Tolman, *Anc. Pers. Lexicon*, p. 119, and *Supplement*, p. 41; King and Thompson, *Behistun*, p. 35, 49, 54; Weissbach, *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, p. 27, 39, 49, 53; Bartholomae, *Altiran. Wb.* col. 1884, addenda to col. 147; Meillet, *Grammaire du vieux perse*, p. 101, 117.

The etymology of the word, however, has remained altogether doubtful. In 1915, for example, Meillet (*op. cit.* p. 101) said: '*am<sup>u</sup>θ, amuθa*, "il s'est enfui"—qui n'a pas d'étymologie

connue.' An attempt was made by Hüsing (*Zt. für vgl. Sprachforschung*, 47. 169 [1915]) to explain *amuḁa* as an *s*-aorist, \**āmṛθ-sa* [sic!] from a presumable OP. root \**mard-*. But the arguments which Hüsing advanced seem totally at fault on phonetic grounds, and it is necessary, therefore, to seek some other explanation.

For this word I now offer the following etymology. The OP. form *amuḁa* is to be read as originally *amuṁṭha* 'he fled,' and the root (to be transcribed as OP. *m'uṁṭh-* or *m'uṁṭh-*) is to be connected with the Skt. root *munṭh* 'to flee,' which is found in the Dhātupāṭha, 8. 12 (Westergaard, *Radices Linguae Sanscritae*, p. 132); see PWb. *munṭh-*, *munṭhate* (*palāyane*, v. 1. *pālāne*, i. e. in the sense of fleeing, retreating, escaping), and cf. likewise Kale, *Higher Sanskrit Grammar*, appendix, p. 90 (Bombay, 1898), where Kale under *munṭh-* 'to run away, flee' gives also the additional Skt. forms *munṭhate*, *mumunṭhe*, *munṭhitā*, *amunṭhiṣṭa*. As Old Persian (like Avestan) possesses no cerebrals, this etymology seems plausible from the point of view of phonology, as well as from that of signification.

### 2-3. OP. *aruvastam* . . . *niyasaya*, NRb. 4-5

On the lower and much-defaced inscription upon the Tomb of Darius at Nakš-i Rostam, the text of NRb. 4-5, together with the opening lines as far as those can be deciphered, reads:—

- 1 *baga vazarka Auramazdā hya* [ad]ā . . [ti(?)]
- 2 *ma(?) f* . . . *ma tya vai[natāiy utā]* adā šī
- 3 *yātim martiyahyā* . . . *t* . . *um ut*
- 4 *ā aruvastam upariy* [Dārāya]vaum xšā
- 5 *yāṭiyam niyasaya*<sup>1</sup>

The translation (in which the two words for which etymologies are here proposed are spaced out) would run:—

A great god is Auramazdāh, who created . . . which seems (?), and created Peace for man . . . and bestowed the sovereignty upon Darius the King.

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<sup>1</sup> I have made use of the photographic reproduction of this inscription published by Weissbach, 'Die Keilinschriften am Grabe des Darius Hystaspis,' plate 6, in *Abh. d. kgl. sächs. Ges. d. Wiss.*, 29<sup>a</sup>, Leipzig, 1911. Some of the characters are quite obscure or obliterated, but all the letters of the last part of the sentence are clear enough for practical purposes.

(a) *aruvastam*.—This word, which apparently occurs again in line 33 and is here translated 'sovereignty,' has long been an etymological problem for scholars. Bartholomae, *AirWb.* 201, gives simply a question-mark ('—?—'), without suggesting any meaning or possible derivation. So also Oppert, Spiegel, and Tolman. Foy, *KZ* 37. 534, has merely the memorandum '*aruvastam* (?)' in a list which he gives of a score of examples of Iranian *s* before a consonant (except *r*) = OP. *s*.

On the other hand, as far back as 1846, Rawlinson was on the right track when he said (*JRAS* 10. 313): 'I suspect that the sentence in which these words [*aruvastam* . . . *niyasaya*] occur contains some interesting allusion to the protective influence that was supposed to be shed by the divinity over the person of the king.' This supposition on Rawlinson's part has been justly noted by Weissbach (*Keilinschriften am Grabe*, p. 39; *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, p. 93), who infers accordingly that *aruvastam* 'bedeutet wahrscheinlich "Majestät"'; but he does not discuss the word further.

An etymological explanation, however, may now be offered. The word *aruvastam* is to be connected, on direct phonological grounds, with Av. *aurvant-*, *aurvat-* 'lordly, princely, sovereign,' Skt. *árvant-*, *árvat-*; it is a neuter noun-formation (*aruvat-ta*-) derived from the adjective in question, precisely as Av. *ašavasta*- 'quality of being righteous' is a neuter derivative from *ašavant-*, *ašavat-* 'righteous.' The Iranian law *tt* > *st* is familiar.

(b) *niyasaya*.—This verb form has been likewise somewhat of a crux. Years ago Lassen (*ZKM* 6. 121) suggested deriving it from Skt. *śī*, and translated thus '*nijaçaja*, "legte."' To this proposal Benfey objected (*Die persischen Keilinschriften*, p. 61, Leipzig, 1847); it was still accepted, however, in 1911 by Weissbach (*Keilinschriften am Grabe*, p. 39; *Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, p. 93). But the fact that we should expect *θ* instead of *s*, and the real lack of support for *śī* with the prefix *ni*, together with the general use of *aśayat* as intransitive in Sanskrit, combined with the fact that—if causative—the Skt. *śāyayati* would lead one to expect a long *ā* in the OP. radical, would render the attempted comparison with the Skt. root *śī* very uncertain.

For that reason I suggested, at the meeting in Boston, April 17, 1914, that the OP. verb was connected with Skt. *yam*,

*yaccha* + *nī* in the sense of 'bestow, confer' (cf. *PWb.* s. v. 5, 'dauernd verleihen'). For the usage we may compare RV. 4. 50. 10, *asmé rayīm sárvaṽīraṁ nī yacchatam*, and also RV. 7. 82. 8, besides other examples. The OP. form *niyasaya* (*niyasaya<sup>t</sup>*) would thus be an *aya*-formation based on the present stem *yasa-*, which is well attested both in Old Persian and in Avestan. Yet again—to explain the special verbal formation—as the OP. preterit consistently employs the *a*-augment, *niyasaya<sup>t</sup>* would stand for \**niyayasaya<sup>t</sup>*, or, in other terms, because of the common Iranian avoidance of a repeated syllable (especially here to reduce *yaya..ya*), thru haplology for *niya-[ya]asaya<sup>t</sup>*. Thus the passage means 'he bestowed the sovereignty upon Darius.'

[Since the presentation to the Society of this communication, which has hitherto remained unpublished, there has appeared (1915) Meillet's *Grammaire du vieux perse*, in which (p. 104) he similarly takes *niyasaya* as apparently a causative made secondarily on the stem of the present *yasa-*; and in this he is directly followed (1917) by Johnson, *Historical Grammar of the Ancient Persian Language*, § 478 b. Yet, even tho neither of the two scholars has touched upon the question of the augment in the case of the verb in point, I am glad now to have such weight of authority to support the etymology here suggested for *niyasaya*. I hope that the etymology suggested above for *aruvastam* may find the same support.]